



Cultural & Creative Practice Survey 2019

# ARTISTS IN MALTA: MYTH TO METHOD

THEMATIC  
REPORT



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Arts Council Malta  
TG Complex Suite 1, Level 1  
Triq il-Birrerija, Zone 3  
Central Business District  
Birkirkara, CBD 3040, Malta  
Tel: (+356) 2334 7201/2  
E-mail: [strategy@artscouncil.mt](mailto:strategy@artscouncil.mt)  
Website: [www.artscouncil.gov.mt](http://www.artscouncil.gov.mt)

Partners:



National Statistics Office  
Lascaris, Valletta VLT 2000, Malta  
Tel: (+356) 2599 7000  
E-mail: [nso@gov.mt](mailto:nso@gov.mt)  
Website: [www.nso.gov.mt](http://www.nso.gov.mt)

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Authors: Dr Marie Briguglio and Gilmour Camilleri  
Coordination: Arts Council Malta  
Artwork and Design: Uwejja! - A Creative Media House

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study is one of a number of initiatives undertaken by the Arts Council Malta (ACM) in an effort to map the working conditions of artistic, creative and cultural (ACC) practitioners in Malta. It is driven by the ACM's commitment to champion the advancement of the status of artists, and other cultural and creative practitioners, and to support the professional development of the creative sector through evidence-based research.

The study employs a statistical analysis of the data captured by the Malta National Statistics Office Creative & Cultural Practice Survey, where 1,019 persons completed a Computer Assisted Telephone Interview during the last quarter of 2019.

The study reveals that around one in five respondents in Malta consider themselves to be artists, a ratio that resonates with similar studies. Strong associations are found between self-assessment and more objective descriptors, lending weight to the position that it is plausible to rely on self-assessment to identify artists in Malta - albeit an imperfect proxy. If artists are to be defined by any other single metric (such as being formally trained, belonging to an ACC organisation, or even earning a living from the arts), then the percentage of people who can be considered as artists would be smaller. If all ACC practitioners were to be included in the definition of artist, then the number of artists would double. Artists are more likely to be in employment, have a higher education, and are more likely to be male than the general population.

The study also reveals that artists report a higher-than-average level of life satisfaction. Strong links between art and wellbeing are found among those practicing on behalf of a voluntary organisation. Furthermore, artists who apply their skills at work report a good work-life balance.

On the theme of family and society, the study finds that one is more likely to find artists still living with parents, which may be partly explained by the slightly younger average age of artists versus the rest of the population. In terms of social engagement, only around a third of self-assessed artists stated that they practiced their activity on behalf of an organisation during the last 12 months, with the majority being women. Artists who practice on behalf of an organisation, are more likely to say that they feel public recognition for their work.

Only around a fourth of self-assessed artists are VAT-registered and even fewer (around a fifth) enjoy any paid hours for their ACC activity. Many of those whose practice supports them financially are teachers within their ACC field. The study finds that one in two artists are able to practice their ACC activity thanks to the support of their main employment. Both time and finance appear to be a constraint for several artists and most artists would increase the number of hours spent on artistic practice if money were no issue.

These findings and others detailed in the report that follows, should be interesting to policy-makers, practitioners, sponsors, researchers and other stakeholders. In particular, they may help the ACM to identify structural issues that need to be addressed in order to support the growth of sector and practitioners in their ACC work.

## INTRODUCTION

This study forms part of a suite of initiatives taken by the Arts Council Malta (ACM) in an effort to map the working conditions of artistic, creative and cultural (ACC) practitioners in Malta. It is driven by the ACM's commitment, outlined in Strategy 2025, to champion the advancement of the status of artists and other cultural and creative practitioners, and to support the professional development of the creative sector through evidence-based research (Arts Council Malta, 2021).

In turn, the National Cultural Policy 2021 pledges to elevate the status of the artist in Malta and ensure the sustainability of artistic practice and creative work (Ministry for the National Heritage, the Arts and Local Government, 2021).

These ambitions echo those of the 2019 UNESCO Report on Culture and Working Conditions of Artists, which argues that improving artists' professional, social and economic status is crucial in ensuring their ability to face the emerging challenges that artists around the world may face (UNESCO, 2019). This is also true of the local context, where economic, social and legislative changes over the past years have brought about new realities.

The overarching objective of this study is to assess the relationships between creative practice and various aspects of social and economic life, including employment, income, time, and wellbeing, amongst others. Simply put, the study helps us to understand what it means to be an artist in Malta.

*'Simply put, the study helps us to understand what it means to be an artist in Malta'*

The findings herewith should be interesting to policy-makers, practitioners, sponsors, researchers and other stakeholders. They may help the ACM to identify some of the structural issues that need to be addressed in order to support the growth of sector, and to advocate for policy changes that would enable creative practitioners to work with greater security and freedom.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employs a statistical analysis of the data captured by the Creative & Cultural Practice Survey (CCPS, 2023), whose target was all persons aged 16 years and over, living in private households in Malta. A total of 425,698 persons were therefore eligible to participate in the survey, and following a process of probability sampling, 1,019 persons completed a Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI). Data was collected between the 30th September and the 12th October 2019 and thus precedes the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The margin of error is 2.75% for questions where 30 or more people reported.

*'Following a process of probability sampling, 1019 respondents completed a Computer Assisted Telephone interview.'*

The questionnaire content was designed by Arts Council Malta, guided by experts in the field and the National Office of Statistics of Malta. Basic demographic questions such as age, sex, citizenship, locality of residence, education, labour and family status were obtained for all respondents. Respondents were also asked to report the total hours of paid work they undertook per week.

The questionnaire distinguished among various ACC activities, including visual arts, crafts, creative computing, dance, creative writing, film-making, photography, playing a musical instrument, singing and acting on stage or in film. Respondents were asked to report both practice during the previous 12 months and in the year prior to that.

Respondents were also asked whether they were involved in ACC by way of creating, performing, producing, directing/curating, teaching or studying. In describing their practice, respondents were also asked whether they did so on behalf of a public, private, voluntary or other organisation, and, in the case of the latter, what kind of voluntary organisation.

A number of questions tackled the issue of time. Respondents were asked about their hours of practice and to contrast these with their preferred hours of practice. They were also asked how many hours of paid employment they spent on ACC activities during the last 12 months. Their views were also sought on the statement: "Time constraints hinder my involvement in artistic practice".

On the issue of finance, respondents were asked whether their ACC practice was supported financially by their main employment or whether it supported them financially. Drilling down further, respondents were asked how much money they spent to practice ACC activities and how much revenue they made. Respondents were also asked whether their ACC activity was VAT-registered. Respondent views were also sought on the statement "Financial considerations hinder my involvement in artistic practice".

In seeking to understand who identifies as an artist in Malta, respondents were asked to indicate: (i) whether they consider themselves to be an artist, (ii) whether they are formally trained in ACC, (iii) whether they feel recognised by their peers, or by the general public, (iv) whether they have a special talent, (v) spend substantial time on ACC, (vi) make some income from ACC practice, (vii) whether they make a living from it, or intend to make a living from it and (viii) whether they belong to an ACC organisation.

Finally, and more broadly, respondents were asked whether they use artistic or creative skills in their primary employment and whether their practice helps them achieve a good work/life balance. They were also to rank their level of satisfaction with their current everyday life on a Cantril ladder scale from 1 to 10.

The approach taken in this report involved exploring four common assumptions (“myths”) about ACC practice. For each of these, we adopt a two-step method of first exploring the literature - including any empirical findings in Malta, and then examining the data from the CCPS. In most instances, the report relies on simple analysis of means (testing for significant differences among artists, non-artist practitioners and the rest of the population), and bivariate correlation analysis (testing for the significance of the relationship between two variables).

Ahead of a more detailed analysis, Table 1 below summarizes some of the key differences between artists, other practitioners and the rest of the population. In this table, artists are defined according to whether they self-assess as artists, and other practitioners are those who have practised any artistic activities in the last 12 months. These features and others are discussed in the sections that follow.

**Table 1. Main Distinctions between Artists, Other Practitioners and Non-Practitioners<sup>1</sup>**

	“Artists” Average	Other Practitioners Average	Non-Practitioners Average
<b>TOTAL RESPONSES</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>673</b>
Age 1=16-20, 2=21-30, 3=31-40, 4=41-50, 5=51-60, 6=61-70, 7=71+	3.33	3.47	4.38
Gender 0=Other, 1=Female	0.53	0.50	0.45
District 0=Malta, 1=Gozo	0.14	0.14	0.16
Life-satisfaction 10 point	8.05	7.81	7.82
Employed 0=No, 1=Yes	0.65	0.50	0.52
Lives with parent 0=No, 1=Yes	0.44	0.38	0.23
Lives with partner and children 0=No, 1=Yes	0.37	0.32	0.41
Financial considerations hinder ACC activity 0=Strongly Disagree - 4=Strongly Agree	1.12	0.89	0.55
Time constraints hinder ACC participation 0=Strongly Disagree - 4=Strongly Agree	1.99	1.79	1.02
ACC contributes creatively to main job 0=Strongly Disagree - 4=Strongly Agree	1.29	0.76	0.45

<sup>1</sup>Artists’ are those respondents who self-assessed themselves as artists. ‘Other practitioners’ are respondents who did not self-identify themselves as artists but still reported having practised an artistic activity in the last year. Respondents who neither self-identify as artists nor practised an artistic activity in the previous 12 months are classified as ‘non-practitioners’.

## ANALYSIS

### IDENTIFYING ARTISTS

#### *'Are you an artist if you think you are?'*

The first question explored is whether it is possible to identify artists based on subjective self-assessment. The study sets out to test whether there is truth in the common myth that *"you are an artist if you think you are"*.

The UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist (1980, p.149) defines an artist as *"a person who creates or give creative expression to, or re-creates works of art, who considers his artistic creation to be an essential part of his life, who contributes in this way to the development of art and culture and who is or asks to be recognised, whether or not he is bound by any relations of employment or association."*

By this definition, any person who considers artistic creation as an essential part of his life is considered an artist. This approach is practical because it avoids requirements for more detailed assessments of artistic practice and outcomes, and it is used extensively. Defining artists in this way helps to spot emerging artists (Karttunen, 1998) and avoid elitism (Towse, 1996).

On the other hand, as some have argued, one can hardly be considered an artist unless one's work is exhibited or published (Frey and Pommerehne, 1989) or if individuals define themselves as artists for the sense of achievement that comes with the title (Craig, 2007).

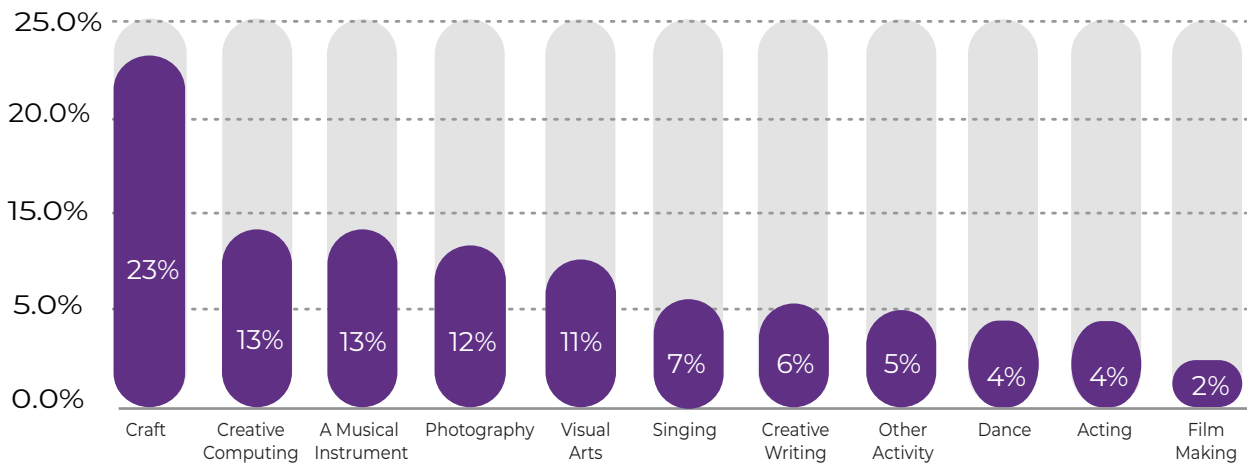
Malta's Cultural Participation Survey (2017) finds that one in five people (21.4%) at the time considered themselves to be artists. Briguglio et al. (2020) find that this self-assessment is, in fact, highly correlated with active (productive) participation in the arts.

On this basis, this study first examines whether the population of self-assessed artists again constitutes around 1 out of every 5 adults in Malta. It then proceeds to test whether people who self-assess as artists also undertake various activities which may more objectively be associated with being an artist.

In examining the data, it is noteworthy that 346 respondents (34%) stated that they practiced some form of ACC. Of these, the most prevalent were crafts (23.4%), creative computing (13.3%), playing a musical instrument (12.8%), photography (11.5%) and visual arts (11.2%).



**Figure 1. Artistic, creative and cultural practice**

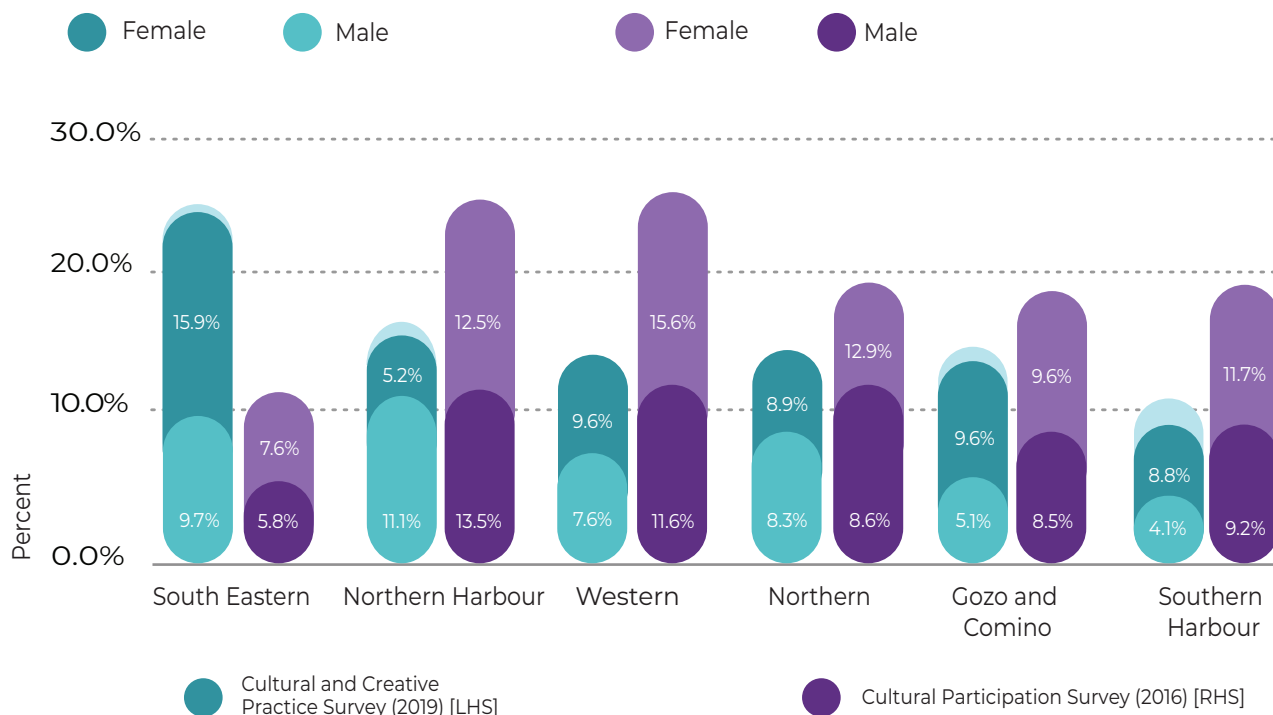


Yet it is fewer than half of those who stated that they practiced, who consider themselves to be artists. This figure broadly corresponds with the rate of self-assessed artists reported in Malta's Cultural Participation Survey (2017) and provides support in favour of the first expectation, namely that around one-fifth of Malta's adult population self-assess as an artist.

*'Around 1 in 5 adults in Malta identify as artists.'*

In Figure 2 below, this data is decomposed by district and compared to the data collected in 2016 (Cultural Participation Survey). Interestingly, in all districts, the percentage of artists is lower in the 2019 data, except in the South Eastern Region, where the percentage of artists in the population (relative to 2016) has increased markedly. One reason for this may be the relative affordability of property in the South East Region.

**Figure 2. Percentage of self-assessed artists classified by district of residence and gender**



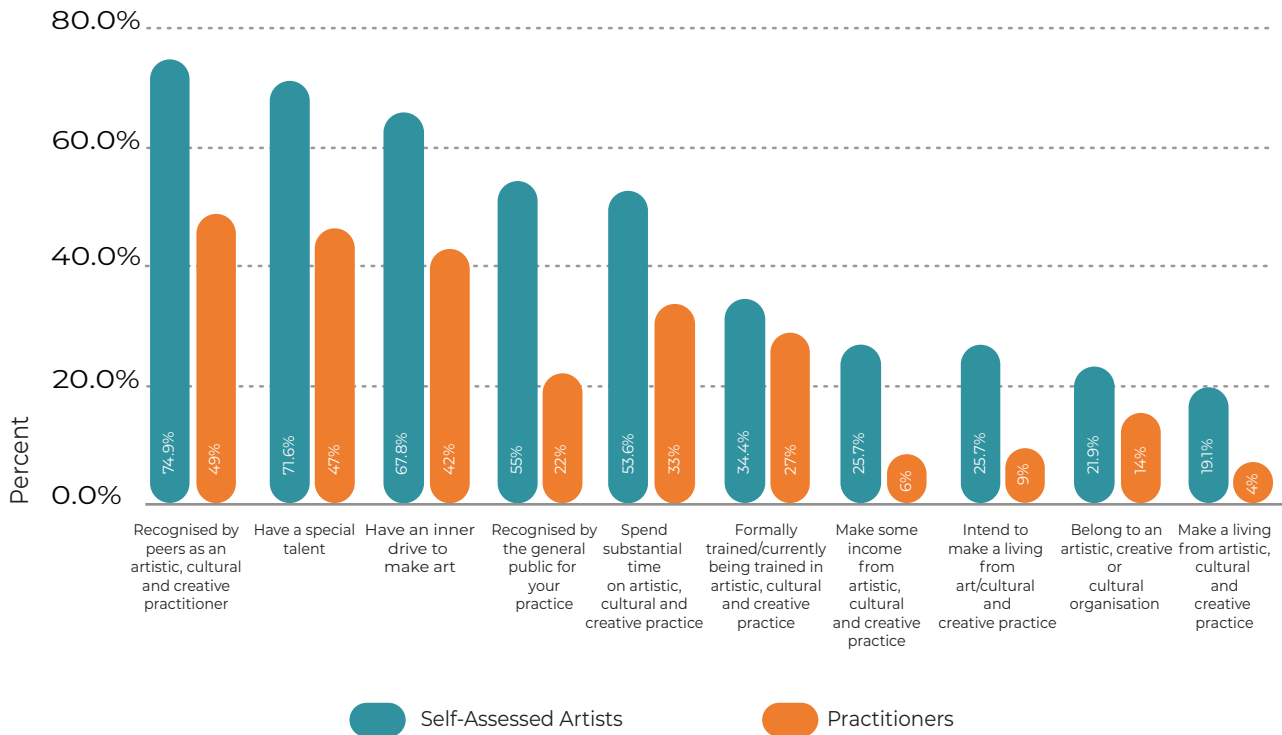
But while these insights on the number and gender/district profile of artists are interesting, it is important to ask whether they can be taken at face-value. Can the persons identifying as artists actually be said to be artists by other, more objective criteria?

As indicated in Figure 3, persons who self-assess as artists also typically believe that peers recognise them as ACC practitioners (74.9%) and most of them consider themselves to have a special talent (71.6%). On the other hand, it is only slightly more than half of the self-assessed artists sampled who also state that they feel recognised by the general public for their practice (55.2%). A similar percentage stated that they spend substantial time on artistic, cultural and creative practice (53.6%).

Among those who consider themselves as artists, slightly more than a third (34.4%) have been formally trained, and 25.7% who make some income or who intend to make a living from their artistic, cultural and creative practice. Only one in five people who call themselves artists (19.1%) make a living from their practice. Slightly more belong to an ACC organisation.

*'The majority of self-assessed artists have not been formally trained.'*

**Figure 3. Objective descriptors of self-assessed artists and non-artist practitioners**



Further analysis finds that nine out of ten self-assessed artists in Malta also see themselves as fulfilling at least one of the ten descriptors. Cumulatively, about half of the self-assessed artists in Malta tick up to four of the ten objective descriptors listed. However, only one in ten of self-assessed artists tick nine or more of the objective descriptors.

Contrasting this with other ACC practitioners who do not consider themselves as artists, the study finds that fewer (three out of four) fulfil at least one of the ten descriptors and barely any non-artists practitioners tick either nine or all objective descriptors.

On all the key attributes examined in Figure 3, practitioners who do not identify as artists score considerably lower than those who do. For instance, while three-quarters of artists feel recognized by peers, less than half of the other practitioners do; while over half of artists feel recognized by the public, less than a quarter of other practitioners do. The only area where artists and other practitioners do not display too large of a difference is in their formal training (34% of artists as opposed to 27% of other practitioners are formally trained).

Correlation analysis (involving tests of association in the linear relationship between two variables) reveals a significant association (at the 99% confidence level) between considering oneself as artist and doing several of the things that artists typically do.

There is also a positive and significant (99% level) correlation between self-assessing as an artist and the number of ACC activities practised. An unexpected finding is that 26% of artists stated that they practised none of the activities presented to them in the last 12 months, though a third of these had practised at least one of them in the previous year. The hours spent on ACC are higher on average among artists than other practitioners. Indeed, the weekly mean hours spent on ACC activities by self-assessed artists is 10.6, in contrast with 7.4 among non-artist practitioners.

*‘There is a strong association between considering oneself to be an artist and doing the things that artists typically do.’*

In other findings pertinent to the economics of being an artist, self-assessed artists are 5 times as likely to make a living from ACC than other practitioners, and three times as likely to state that they intend to make a living from ACC. They are more likely to be VAT-registered in their practice and to be financially supported by their practice. The average revenues and expenses they report are higher than those of practitioner non-artists.

On the basis of this analysis, it can be concluded that self-assessment can adequately, if broadly, predict the true status of being an artist, given the high correlation with the more objective criteria examined. Self-assessed artists fulfil more of these criteria, spend longer hours at their practice and engage in a broader number of ACC activities than other practitioners and non-practitioners. They are also more economically engaged in their field.

It can also be reiterated that roughly two in ten adults in Malta consider themselves to be an artist. However, if artists were to be defined by single metrics such as being formally trained, belonging to an ACC organisation, or even earning a living from the arts, then it would be necessary to conclude that there are far fewer artists than this. On the other hand, if artists were to be defined by virtue of practising any ACC activity, then the number of artists in Malta would be considered to be higher. Indeed, by this broad metric, as many as four in ten adults in Malta are artists.

These findings hold useful policy implications for policy makers within the creative sector, including, firstly, that reliance on self-assessment for the purpose of identifying artists can be a helpful tool for identifying artists; secondly, that the adult demographic of interest extends anywhere from less than 5% (artists who make a living from their ACC practice) to over 33% of the population (both artists and recent practitioners); and thirdly that reliance on clear and objective criteria to identify artists (such as having formal training, making income or a living from ACC activity or being in an ACC organisation) are likely to vastly underestimate the population of artists.

## ASSESSING WELLBEING

### *'Do artists lead better lives?'*

The second question explored is whether ACC practice is linked with positive effects on wellbeing - diversely measured as life-satisfaction, work-life balance, or living a well-rounded life.

Some authors posit that artists tend to have higher life satisfaction due to increased variety of work, on-the-job training and a higher self-employment rate (Steiner & Schnieder, 2013). Cultural practitioners managing their own cultural initiatives tend to report more enjoyable experiences (Baklien, 2000). Others contend that artists simply enjoy their work and are happier (Bille et al., 2013).

The literature also points to a positive relationship between artistic practice and various other aspects of a good life, such as health (Fujiwara, 2013; Owen, 2013) and mental health (Billington et al., 2010; Cuypers et al., 2012; Buttrick et al., 2013).

Active participation in the arts is also associated with the development of new skills (Rolph, 2001; Sharp, 2001). A positive relationship has also been noted between artistic practice and education, especially in mathematics and languages (Kidd et al., 2013).

Furthermore, those engaged in the arts are more likely to find and retain employment and to be influential in their local communities (Collins et al., 2013). While studies have found that artists earn less and are more prone to unemployment relative to other professions (Alper & Wassall, 2006; Bille et al., 2013), Csikszentmihalyi (1990) argues that artists are likely to be driven more by the intrinsic rewards rather than the external rewards like money, praise, and promotion.

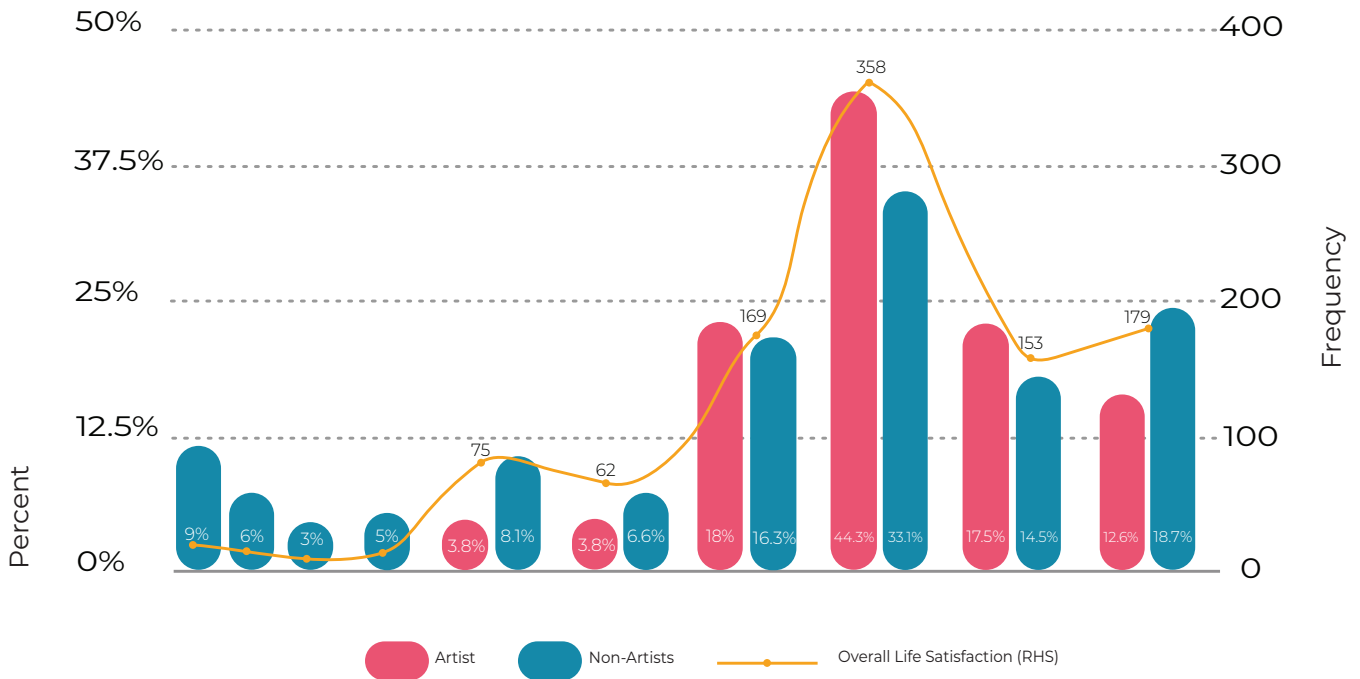
At least three studies have been conducted to explore some of these aspects in Malta. The first, Briguglio and Sultana (2015) finds that participation in village feasts 'festi' is associated with higher levels of wellbeing among participants. A later study by the same authors concludes that active cultural participation more broadly is positively associated with life satisfaction (Briguglio & Sultana, 2017). Finally, Briguglio et al. (2020) employ nationally representative data and find that self-assessed artists tend to have higher education levels and to report higher levels of life satisfaction than others.

On the basis of these insights, this study employs the data collected by the CCPS to test whether artists in the sample have higher levels of life satisfaction than non-artists. The study also explores the respondents' takes on their work-life balance and satisfaction with use of time.

A first glance at the data reveals that the most common score for life satisfaction (measured on scale from 1 = Very dissatisfied to 10 = Very satisfied) from the whole sample of respondents was 8, similar to the mean returned by prior studies in Malta (Briguglio & Sultana, 2017; Briguglio et al. 2020).

Figure 4 illustrates the distribution of responses among artists. Of particular relevance to the question at hand is that the mean score for self-assessed artists is 8.1, in contrast with that of non-artist practitioners and non-artists which stands at 7.8. Considering the standard deviations, this is a statistically significant difference at the 90% confidence level.

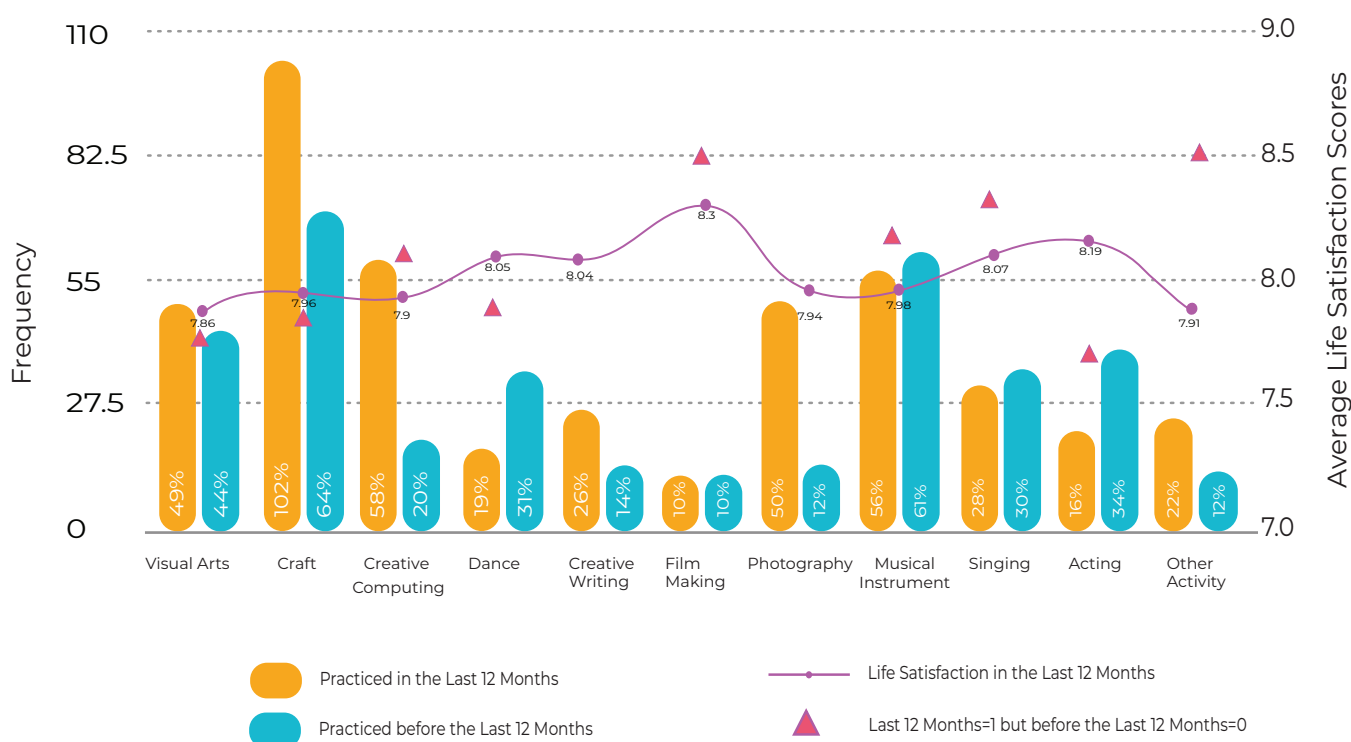
**Figure 4. Life satisfaction (artists vs non-artists)**



*‘Artists report a higher level of life satisfaction than other adults in Malta.’*

It is also interesting to note that artists return a lower standard deviation relative to non-artists, suggesting less variation in life-satisfaction scores among this subset of the population. Exploring life-satisfaction by domain of engagement (Figure 5) reveals minor differences, with film-making attaining the highest average score (8.3).

**Figure 5. Mean life satisfaction scores of artists in the last year**



As indicated in the chart above, the data also reveals considerable increases in the uptake of crafts, creative computing and photography and decreases in dance and acting between the year of study and the year prior to that. In the light of the changes observed, the implications of taking up or dropping some activity were also examined. Mean life satisfaction among respondents who used to practice in the previous year and now stopped is (7.8), while the mean life satisfaction among those who did not practice last year and now started is (7.9). However, it is prudent to note that the difference could also be co-determined by other factors that influence life-satisfaction among those who stopped their practice and those who took it up.

The data available in the CCPS also allows an assessment of work-life balance. We note that the average result on the 1-8 scale of hours of paid work among artists is 4.99. On this scale, where 1 is less than 10 hours a week and 8 is 70 hours or more, this is equivalent to 30-40 hours per week on average, and is marginally higher than that among non-artist practitioners (4.91) and non-practitioners (4.88).

The data also reveals that 73.3% of self-assessed artists report that their artistic practice helps them achieve a good work-life balance. This, in sharp contrast with the 20% of respondents who practice some ACC but who do not consider themselves to be artists – the difference is significant at the 99% confidence level.

Drilling down deeper, it can be noted that as many as 90% of the self-assessed artists who state that they apply their artistic and creative skills in their primary employment, report having a good work-life balance. A lower but still strong percentage (77.1%) of non-artist practitioners who apply skills at work also report good work-life balance. These figures contrast sharply with those returned by respondents who do not apply creative skills at work, among whom good work-life balance is reported by 34.5% (artists) and 38.5% (non-artist practitioners).

*‘As many as 90% of artists who apply their skills at work, report a good work-life balance.’*

Examining these questions by domain reveals other insights: The highest reports of work-life balance among practitioners surveyed came from those engaging in visual arts, playing a musical instrument, dance, crafts, singing and creative computing, where the mean reporting good work-life balance stood above 76.5%.

Further insights into a well-rounded life may be obtained from the question as to the differences between time actually spent on ACC activities and time respondents wished they could spend on such activities. The smaller the difference between these values can indicate a greater level of satisfaction with time use. On average, people would like to spend 7-8 hours longer on their practice. The main difference which could be observed between artists and non-artist practitioners is that artists prefer to practice on average 10 to 14 hours while non-artist practitioners prefer 5-9 hours a week.

In terms of employment, the figures clearly indicate that artists are more likely to be employed (whether as an artist or otherwise) than the rest of the population. The difference is striking with two out of three artists being employed in contrast with one out of two practitioners or non-practitioners. Finally, it is pertinent to note that there is a clear and positive correlation between educational levels and practising the arts. In fact, out of 183 self-assessed artists, around 30% have a tertiary level of education. The same proportion is recorded for non-artist practitioners. This is in contrast with 16.3% among non-practitioners. It echoes the results in other studies (e.g. Briguglio et al 2020).

In summary, we find some support for the notion that artists tend to score higher on life-satisfaction than non-artists and non-artist practitioners. Artists who apply their skills at work overwhelmingly report that their artistic practice helps them achieve a good work-life balance. There is also a clear and positive correlation between educational levels and ACC practice. Artists are more likely to be in employment than other members of the population. On average, artists tend to work longer hours and spend more hours engaged in their ACC practice than anyone else in Malta.

These findings have important implications for stakeholders in Malta, chiefly (i) they shed light on the association between art and life-satisfaction, lending weight to the possible importance of investment in this field; (ii) they highlight the potential of ACC activity as a transversal activity that can enhance work-life balance if applied at work; and (iii) they reveal a relationship between ACC practice, education and employment – something which can perhaps identify a gap to address among the unemployed, lower educated demographics.



## FAMILY AND SOCIETY

### *'Are artists difficult to live with?'*

The third area of focus is that of the artist within the context of family and society. A persistent myth about artists is that they tend to be difficult to live with (Wittkower et al., 2007). Artists are frequently portrayed as raucous and unusual, living in cluttered spaces and being socially awkward (Mann 1989; Sondheim 1986). *“The “otherness” of artists [is] widely accepted by the general public...There is an almost unanimous belief [that] artists are, and always have been, egocentric, temperamental, neurotic, rebellious, unreliable, licentious, extravagant, obsessed by their work, and altogether difficult to live with.”* (Wittkower et al., 1963, p. xix).

The struggle of role-ambivalence has also received some attention, whereby male artists may struggle with the “breadwinner” role (Earle et al., 1991), this issue ostensibly being less of a problem for women (Cartel et al., 1976; Doudna et al., 1981). Empirical evidence suggests a relationship between role ambivalence and marital stability, which is also influenced by age at the time of first marriage, stability of income, homogamy, and religiosity (Earle et al., 1991; Flisbäck, M., & Lindström, S. 2014).

There also exist diverse public images of artists and their social life. A contemporary public image of the artist is that of an entertainer who is expected to arouse senses and trigger emotions in extraordinary ways. Others view artists as rebellious, at the centre of contentious debate, challenging the public to think innovatively and inspire intellectual dialogue (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2008).

Yet, artistic engagement is also known to reduce isolation, help people feel safer in their local community, reduce social tension and discrimination and increase empathy towards others (Lee et al., 2010). Both adults and children involved in arts have also been observed to engage more in civic activities (Goldstein, 2011; Bennett et al., 2013; Stern and Seifert 2009).

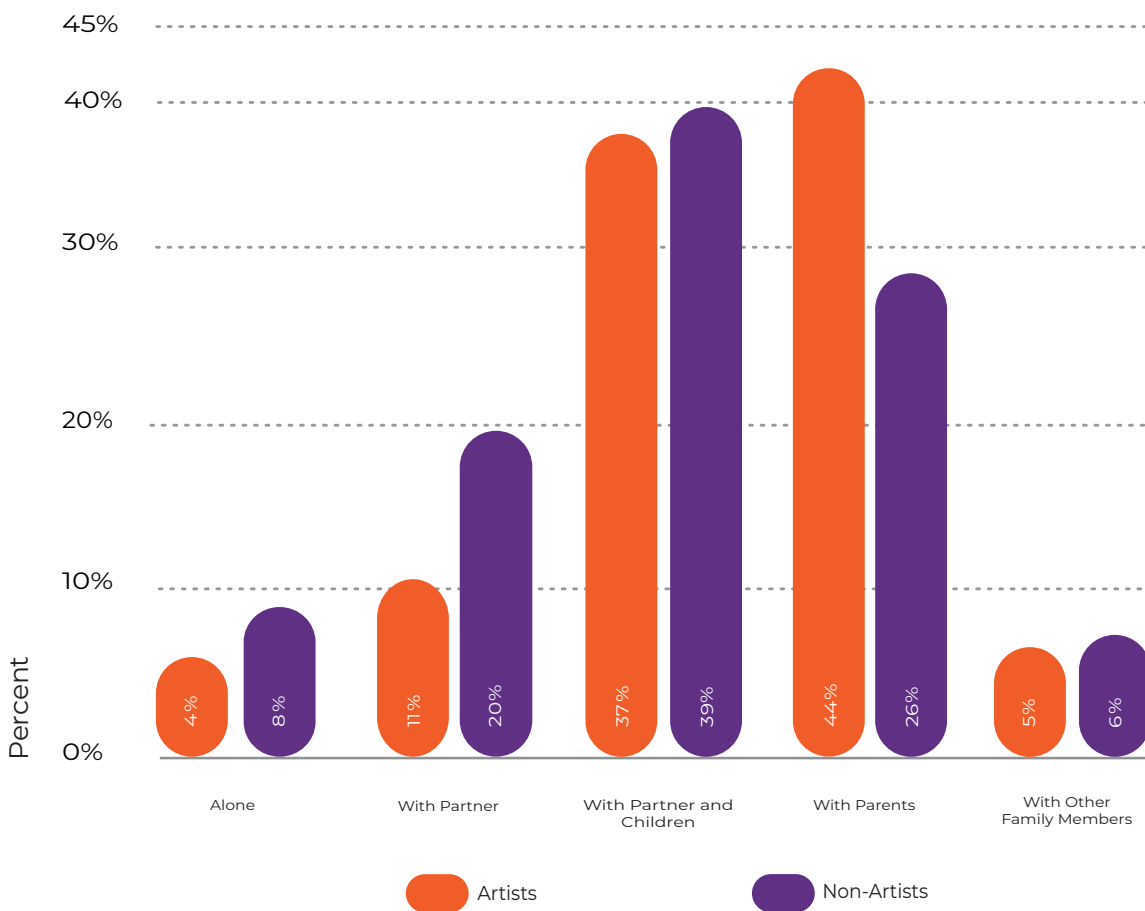
Based on a study conducted in Malta, Briguglio et al. (2020) find that artists tend to hold a higher level of interest in the environment, sport and religion. They also tend to donate more to the arts. In this study, artists were no more or less likely to be married than others.

Against this backdrop, it is interesting to explore the family life of artists in Malta and any insights on their role in society.

The first point of note is that, in all regions except the Northern Harbour, fewer females are likely to state that they are artists than males. While the whole population of females:males is split 50:50, the population of ACC practitioners is split 46:54 and that of artists is 45:55.

As is illustrated in Figure 6, the percentage living with a partner and children is at its highest among adults who do not practice any ACC at all. The causality is not clear - while it may suggest that having children suppresses the ability to engage in ACC practice, it can also suggest that non-practitioners are more likely to entertain a family. Artists are significantly more likely to continue to live with their parents than others. This, to the extent that it is more likely to find artists/practitioners still living with their parents than with a partner and children, while the opposite holds true for those who do not practice at all. Of relevance to this observation is the fact that the average age of artists and other practitioners in the sample is just over the 31-40 age bracket while that of non-practitioners is just over the 41-50 age bracket.

**Figure 6. Living arrangements of artists and non-artists**



*'It is more likely to find an artist still living with parents than with a partner and children.'*

Assessing this finding for women only, we find the results to be even more striking: an even higher percentage of female artists live with their parents (43.3%), relative to non-artists of the same sex. In turn, a lower percentage of female artists live with a partner (12.4%), or with a partner and children (34.0%).

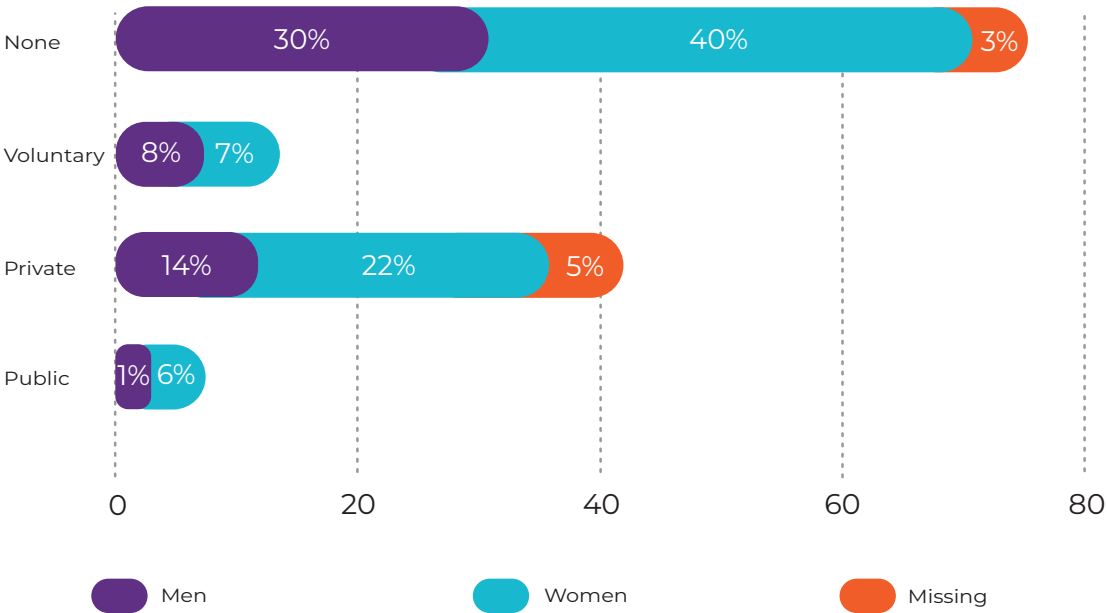
The capacity to make a living from ACC practice perhaps sheds some light on these findings. We find, as anticipated, that artists who do make a living from their practice are more likely to live alone (8.6% vs 2.7%) or with a family (42.9%). However, they are less likely to live with partners (5.7% vs 12.2%) or with parents (40.0% vs 44.6%).

Some interesting distinctions also emerge when drilling down deeper to examine the distinctions between Malta and Gozo. The tendency for artists to live with parents is higher in Malta than in Gozo (45.6% compared with 32.0%). One reason for this may be the higher cost of property in Malta. However, artists in Gozo are more likely to live with other family members relative to those in Malta (16.0% in comparison with 3.2%). No particular differences were noted by other districts of residence.

In terms of social engagement, there is a sharp contrast between artists, non-artist practitioners and the rest of the population. While 30% of artists state they practice on behalf of a private organisation, only 9% of practitioners do so. The percentage of artists and practitioners who practice ACC activity on behalf of a public sector organisation is far lower at 5%-7%. Interestingly, practitioners who do not identify as artists are more likely to practice on behalf of a Voluntary Organisation than self-assessed artists.

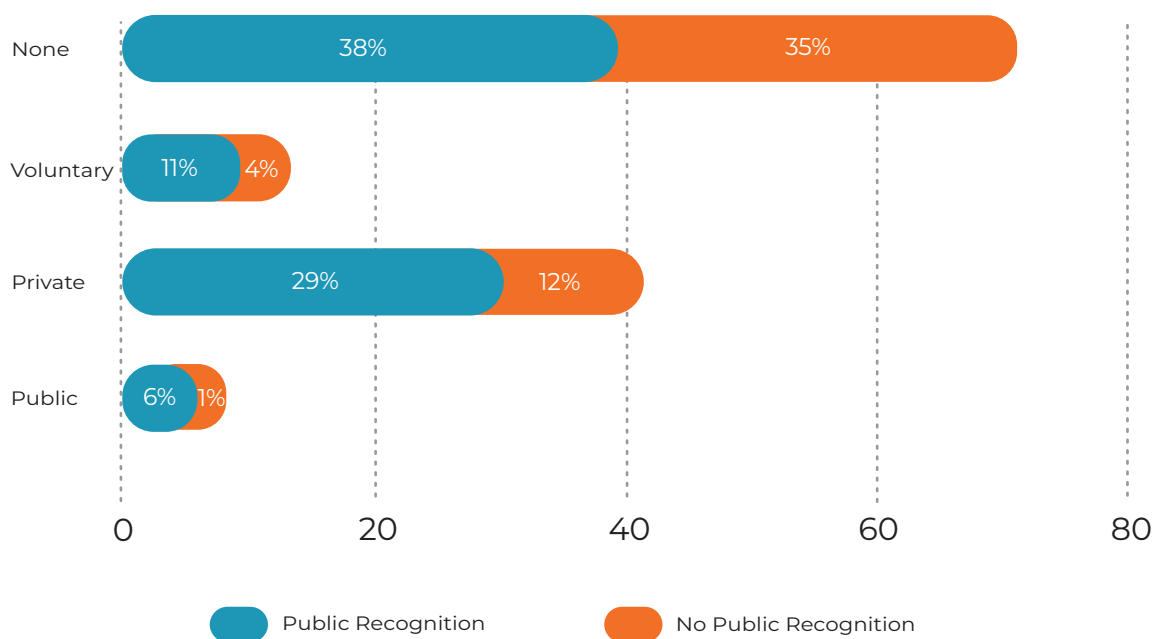
Figure 7 illustrates that out of 136 self-assessed artists who answered this question, around half stated that they practised their activity on behalf of an organisation during the last 12 months, with the majority being women. Both female and male artists were far more likely to be practicing on behalf of a private organisation than for public and voluntary organisations. Among the full artist population, a total of 11.1% of artists were involved in a public organisation, 65.1% in a private organisation and 23.8% in a voluntary organisation.

**Figure 7. Artists practicing on behalf of an organisation by gender**



It can also be noted that artists residing in Malta are more likely to practice on behalf of an organisation relative to their counterparts in Gozo. There is also an age-gradient in engagement with organisations, with the lowest rate of engagement being recorded by younger artists while the highest rates observed attained by middle-aged artists. This said, older artists (61+) are somewhat more likely to be involved in a public sector organisation, while younger artists are significantly more likely to form part of a private organisation. Interestingly, artists who practice on behalf of an organisation are more likely to say that they feel public recognition for their work than otherwise (see Figure 8).

**Figure 8. Artists practicing on behalf of an organisation by public recognition**



*‘Artists who practice on behalf of an organisation, are more likely to say that they feel public recognition for their work.’*

Based on the above, we make a number of observations. Firstly, we note that more males than females identify as artists and practice any ACC activity, but more women than men practice on behalf of an organisation. Secondly, we note that artists are significantly more likely to continue to live with their parents than other ACC practitioners or non-practitioners, and this is more pronounced among artists who do not make a living from their practice. Thirdly, practicing the arts within an organisational setting is more likely to occur in the private sector. Practitioners who do not consider themselves to be artists are more likely to be engaged in voluntary organisations with their ACC activity than artists.

These findings can have interesting implications and provoke further studies, including firstly, whether identifying as an artist is a gendered process and the implications of this; secondly, on the dynamics between practicing ACC activity and having a family; and thirdly, on the potentially larger role of the public sector in ACC employment.

## ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION

### *'Do artists contribute economically?'*

The fourth question explored in this report is that of the economic contribution of ACC activities. Engaging in the cultural field can have diverse implications on the economy generally and employment more specifically. There are several ways to assess the contribution of artistic activities to the economy, with the most common being the contribution of formal (recorded) activity to Gross Domestic Product or Gross Value Added (GVA). Broader approaches, such as the contribution of ACC to wellbeing and as an input in other jobs are discussed in other sections.

According to a study carried out by the European Commission, the cultural and creative sector is estimated to have contributed to 2.6% of EU GDP in 2003, recording a turnover of more than €654 billion and employing 5.8 million people, equivalent to 3.1% of the total employed population in the EU (European Commission, 2006).

In the UK, the arts and cultural sector contributes to around 4 % of GDP, generating more than 260,000 jobs or 1.1 % of total UK employment (CEBR, 2013). In the US, it is estimated that the production of arts and cultural goods and services added 4.3% directly to the nation's GDP (National Endowment for the Arts and Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2019).

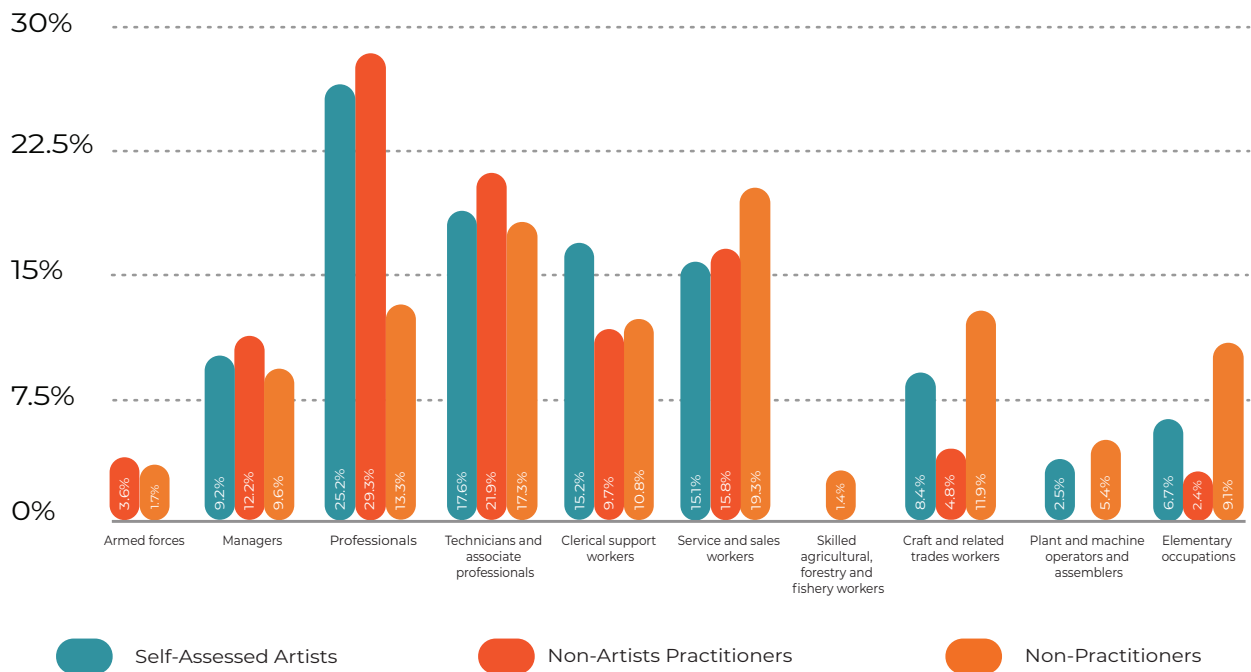
In Malta, in 2007, 3,600 enterprises (predominantly small and medium) were considered to be operating in the cultural and creative industry in Malta while an additional 3,000 enterprises were estimated to have been involved along the supply and distribution chains. The GVA generated per employee in the cultural and creative industry between 2008 and 2010 was around €28,000, with those working in software services generating a GVA per employee exceeding €60,000 while those working in performing arts, crafts, visual arts and music contributed under €10,000. A study conducted by the Economic Policy Department in 2016 found that the culture and creative industries directly contributes to around 5 % of GDP and employs more than 10,000 persons (Vella et al., 2016). The latest study, conducted in 2018, by the same department reports that the culture and creative industries accounted for 7.9% of the total GVA created by the Maltese economy in 2017.

While the data from the CCPS does not allow this kind of extrapolation, it does provide useful insights on the employment profile of artists, on the extent to which participation in ACC supports them financially or is dependent on financial support from other employment, as well as on revenues and expenditures, among other.

As key indication of the links between artistic participation and employment, and as already observed, the study finds that two-thirds of artists are employed. This is substantially higher than the 50% employment among ACC practitioners who do not consider themselves to be artists and the 52% employed among the rest of the population.

Furthermore, one out of every three (33.9) self-assessed artists work as managers, professionals, technicians or associate professionals, in contrast with 25.1% among the rest of the population (See Figure 9). Naturally this is not to suggest that they are employed as artists, but rather that those who are artists are employed at higher rate than others, and in higher ranking jobs than others.

**Figure 9. Occupation of self-assessed artists, non-artist practitioners and non-practitioners**



A second key highlight is that 19% of artists state that they make a living from ACC (in contrast with 4% of other practitioners), while 26% state that they intend to make a living from ACC (in contrast with 9% of practitioners). If these figures can be extrapolated, they would suggest that a non-trivial 5% of adults in Malta already do or intend to make their living from ACC activity. Complementing this is the percentage of adults who claim that their ACC activity at least supports them financially. This figure stands at 31% among artists and 8% among non-artist practitioners.

*‘1 in 5 artists makes a living from their ACC activity.’*

However, for the majority who consider themselves as artists (58.3%), it is their main employment that supports their artistic practice. Of these, 69.2% indicated an annual ACC expenditure lower than €1000. On the other hand, just under one out of every three (31%) self-assessed artists indicated that their artistic practice supports them financially – even though many (54.2%) indicated that their revenues from ACC are lower than €1000 per annum. The figures for revenues and expenses returned by artists are significantly higher than those returned by non-artist practitioners.

In fact, out of the 156 artists who indicated some level of revenue from artistic practice, 81.4% report earning between €0 - €499 annually and 3.2% earn between €500 and €999. A total of 15.4% surpass the €1000 mark. Bivariate analysis indicates, as expected, that the higher the stated income from practice, the more likely are artists to state that the practice supports them financially and that the higher the expenditure for their practice, the more likely is their main employment to finance their arts.

*‘Proportionately more artists are employed than other adults.  
For many, it is their main job which supports their artistic practice.’*

In an attempt to gain further insight on the question of economic contribution, artists were also requested to indicate their VAT status. While the majority of artists indicated that they are not VAT registered, 13.1% stated that they have a VAT number. Assessing these percentages by earnings reveals that, as expected, while only 20% of those who earn less than €500 stated that they are VAT registered, more than double (46%) of those who stated that they earn over €1000 confirmed that they are registered. The relationship between revenue and VAT registration is positive and significant.

Exploring the number of hours spent on artistic practice per week yields further interesting results. Firstly, it is clear that the paid hours of work on ACC are very limited. The total hours spent on artistic practice are namely 10.9 hours on average for artists, 7.5 hours among practitioners and 1.4 hours among the rest of the population. Of these, the average paid hours of work are a mere 1.8 hours for artists and 0.8 hours for practitioners.

Correlation analysis further reveals that there is a positive association between hours spent at ACC practice and revenue generated from such practice, as well as between hours of work spent at ACC practice and VAT registration. These positive relationships are significant at the 99% confidence interval.

An important question which sheds some light on the economic situation of artists is that which asks their level of agreement with the statement ‘Financial Considerations hinder my involvement in Artistic Practice’. Despite the relatively low figures registered for revenues, it was only 21.9% of self-labelled artists who stated that they agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, the rest feeling neutral or showing disagreement. Nonetheless, artists tend to feel this constraint more than non-artist practitioners and other adults. Indeed, among the artists who stated that financial issues hinder their practice, the vast majority (81.8%) would be willing to increase the number of hours spent on artistic practice if money were no issue.

While financial burdens may not be the most predominant limitation, time constraints seem to be. It was over half of the artists who reported agreement or strong agreement with the statement ‘Time Constraints hinder my involvement in Artistic Practice’. Indeed, despite a relatively low level of concern with financial considerations, the majority of artists (56.3%) stated that they would increase the number of hours spent on artistic practice, if money were no issue. Non-artist practitioners seem to feel the deficit even more than artists. On average, they would like to increase their hours by roughly 3 hours per week, in contrast with one and a half hours per week average among artists.

*‘Most artists feel that time constrains their practice and would increase the number of hours spent on artistic practice, if money were no issue.’*

An interesting angle in this analysis is the role of teaching among artists. The largest single portion (62.5%) of those whose practice supports them financially are actually teaching. Whether teaching provides a fall-back job (for those who “cannot do”) or a complementary activity (for those who “can do more”) would be an interesting question for further research.



It does appear, however, that artists who teach tend to score higher on the questions which identify artists objectively. They are highly likely to feel recognised by peers as artistic practitioners (100%), to spend substantial time on their artistic practice (93.8%), to feel recognised by the general public for their practice (93.8%), to consider themselves to have a special talent (87.5%) and have an inner drive to make art (87.0%). The majority (62.5%) are females and 18.8% are from Gozo – representing a larger portion of the actual population.

Reflecting the general distribution of practice in ACC, the largest percentage of those who teach are practising crafts (50.0%) and musical instruments (43.8%), in contrast with those practising dance (12.5%) or acting (12.5%).

In short, in terms of economic contribution, we find that artists tend to be employed and in higher paying jobs than others. In addition, around a fourth of self-assessed artists are VAT-registered and around a fifth enjoy paid hours for their ACC work.

Incomes and expenditures are low in absolute figures. Indeed, artists are more likely to state that their job supports their artistic practice than vice versa. Time constraints appear to be a greater constraint than finance for several artists. Many of those whose practice supports them financially are involved in teaching.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Driven by the ACM's aim to champion the advancement of the status of artists and other cultural and creative practitioners, and to support the professional development of the creative sector through evidence-based research, this study has undertaken a statistical analysis of the data captured by the Creative & Cultural Practice Survey, 2019.

The overarching objective of this study was to assess the relationships between creative practice and various aspects of social and economic life, including employment, income, time, and wellbeing, amongst others. Simply put, the study was to help us understand what it means to be an artist in Malta.

The approach taken in this report involved exploring four common assumptions ("myths") about ACC practice. For each of these, we adopted a two-step method of first exploring the literature - including any empirical findings in Malta, and then examining the data from the CCPS.

### THE MYTH: YOU ARE AN ARTIST IF YOU THINK YOU ARE

We found that roughly two in ten adults in Malta consider themselves to be an artist, while another two in ten practised some ACC activity during the year leading up to the survey but do not consider themselves to be artists. There was considerable evidence that those who consider themselves to be artists are indeed far more involved in activities and phenomena associated with being an artist. However, only a minority of self-labelled artists are formally trained, belong to an ACC organisation, or earn income from the arts. More males than females identify as artists and practice any ACC activity.

### THE MYTH: ARTISTS LEAD BETTER LIVES

We note that artists tend to score higher on life-satisfaction than non-artists as well as in comparison to non-artist practitioners. Artists who apply their skills at work overwhelmingly report that their artistic practice helps them achieve a good work-life balance.

### THE MYTH: ARTISTS ARE DIFFICULT TO LIVE WITH

Artists are more likely to be living with their parents than other ACC practitioners or non-practitioners and less likely to be living with spouse and children. This is particularly pronounced for artists who do not make a living from their ACC activity. We also note a clear and positive correlation between educational levels and ACC practice. Artists (women more than men) do practice their ACC activity at work – mainly in the private sector. Practitioners who do not consider themselves to be artists are more likely to be engaged in voluntary organisations for their ACC activity than artists. Practicing on behalf of an organisation is associated with higher feelings of recognition.

### THE MYTH: ARTISTS DO NOT CONTRIBUTE ECONOMICALLY

We found that artists are more likely to be in employment than other adults. They are also more likely to be economically engaged in their field than other practitioners. Around a fourth of self-assessed artists are VAT-registered and around a fifth enjoy paid hours for their ACC work but stated incomes and expenditures are low in absolute figures. Indeed, artists are more likely to state that their job supports their artistic practice than vice versa. Many of those whose practice supports them financially are involved in teaching.

On the basis of the analysis in this report, we now highlight some considerations which may inform policy or stakeholder actions:

Firstly, we suggest that in exercises that seek to identify artists, self-assessment can be a useful approach and one which is more likely to be satisfactory than reliance on any single objective criterion like formal training or being in an ACC organisation.

Secondly, we note the growing evidence of association between practising ACC activity and life-satisfaction as well as using ACC at the place of work and work-life balance. While the evidence in this study is associative and not causal, it offers another layer of justification for public sector interest in funding or promoting ACC activity – including within public sector organisation.

Thirdly, the finding that artists have higher educational levels, employment levels and are more likely to be male suggests that more work could be done to stimulate the uptake of ACC activity, and to promote “artists” in different socio-economic categories.

The study is not without its shortcomings, which are now outlined for transparency.

Firstly, in utilizing the data in the CCPS survey, it was noted that there were some instances of missing data. This was imputed by the National Statistics Office as the mode of the respective category of relevant demographics. Respondents also seem to have been particularly reluctant to provide reliable answers on income and tax.

Secondly, in much of the report, we compared artists (based on self-assessment) with other practitioners and non-practitioners (based on whether they practised any ACC activity). There are several other comparisons which could have been made which were beyond the scope of this report but which can offer interesting avenues for future research. Thirdly, extrapolation and scalability of the results is constrained by the unavailability of nation-wide data on ACC activity. Relatedly, in some cases, drilling down to assess sub-sample results gave very small samples limiting our ability to draw defined conclusions.

Lastly, the data was gathered before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic may have caused shifts in the trends of artistic, creative and cultural activities, and inferences drawn from this data to formulate policy post-pandemic should be undertaken with due caution.

The findings should nonetheless be interesting to policy makers, practitioners, sponsors, researchers and other stakeholders, offering a snapshot of the situation prior to the pandemic, and setting a benchmark for future post-COVID research. The findings may help ACM to identify structural issues that need to be addressed in order to support the growth of sector and to advocate for policy changes that would enable creative practitioners to work with greater security and freedom.

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